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Statement of Representative Christopher Shays September 13, 2006

Today we continue our three day hearing *Iraq: Democracy or Civil War?*, examining security force levels; prospects for national reconciliation; and the consequences of leaving Iraq immediately, later but still prematurely, or when Iraqis are capable of taking over for Coalition forces.

The conflict in Iraq finds US and Coalition forces up against increasing insurgent, sectarian and terrorist violence.

Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, a supporter of the United States objective to foster progressive democracy in the Middle East bluntly stated, "It is now obvious that we are not midwifing democracy in Iraq. We are baby-sitting a civil war."

While some may take issue with Mr. Friedman's choice of words, the broad contours of his point are clear—the violence in Iraq continues, if not increases, the new Iraqi leadership has not yet shown the political will to confront it, and efforts to promote peace and democracy are stalled.

Iraqi Security Forces are truly improving and growing in number, but they face an uphill battle if Iraqi politicians are not willing to confront the militias and make peace among themselves.

Our witnesses this past Monday came to different conclusions about security in Iraq, but one thing was clear from their testimony: our current baseline for overall security forces is inadequate. We do not have enough Coalition Forces in Iraq.

In addition it is clear to me, based on my fourteen visits to Iraq and all our hearings, the 325,500 projected Iraqi Security Force level to be reached in December of this year will be inadequate, and not allow us to bring most of our troops home.

Only when we establish credible, realistic estimates of the number of Coalition Forces and competent Iraqi Security Forces will we be able to set the conditions to eventually drawdown the US troop commitment in Iraq.

We cannot delude ourselves. If we want to be successful the Administration needs to work with the Iraqi Government to reassess the total number of forces needed to secure Iraq. This reassessment must be completed as quickly as possible.

Today we investigate what may be the most important issue for achieving stability and democracy in Iraq: the political will to implement national reconciliation.

Since January of this year little progress has been made. Some of our diplomats and military officers openly question whether Iraq's leaders have the political will to make the tough decisions required to drive down current violence and maintain security. Last week when Iraqi legislators returned from vacation, the Speaker of their Parliament, Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani, said the Iraqis "have three to four months to reconcile with each other. If the country doesn't survive this, it will go under."

Make no mistake. I understand the Iraqi people and the officials they elected are grappling with daunting issues that have no easy solutions—amnesty, roll back of de-Baathification, federalism, sharing the oil wealth, and standing down militias. But their current inaction is alarming, and should trouble every American concerned for our men and women who are there in harm's way.

Each of the political milestones achieved in Iraq so far has been preceded by strong US pressure. They were more than benchmarks. They were specific timelines established to produce results. These timelines were not easy to meet, but they forced Iraqis to make the difficult choices and compromises to move forward.

It is time for the US government to be blunt with the Iraqi leadership: if they are not willing to make peace among themselves, the United States will have no choice but to rethink how long troops can remain in Iraq. It is time to expect results.

The topics we will discuss today are the prospects, timing, and conditions for achieving national reconciliation and a permanent Constitution. We asked our witnesses to address the following questions:

- What are the positions of the Shia, Sunni and Kurdish political leadership on each issue related to national reconciliation?
- What are possible ways to bridge the differences among the political leadership?
- What are prospects for agreement among the political leadership, and when can we expect such agreements to be reached?

During our first panel, we will hear testimony from Ambassador David Satterfield. Ambassador Satterfield is the Senior Advisor on Iraq to the Secretary of State and was formerly Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Baghdad. Also testifying on Panel I will be Mr. Jim Bever, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Near East and Asia, US Agency for International Development.

On our second panel, we are fortunate to hear the perspectives of three prominent Iraqis: Dr. Hajim Al-Hassani, former Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament and currently a Sunni Member of Parliament; Mr. Karim Al-Musawi, Washington Representative of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the largest political party in Iraq; and Mr. Qubad Talibany, Washington Representative of the Kurdish Regional Government and son of Iraq's President, Jalal Talabany.

We thank all our witness for taking the time to appear before us today.